

## 10. SIGHTING OF THE THREETOED KINGFISHER *CEYX ERITHACUS ERITHACUS* (LINN.) IN PUNE CITY

On October 11, 1995, a threetoed kingfisher *Ceyx erithacus erithacus* was sighted on the banks of the Mula-Mutha river in the vicinity of one of the most crowded parts of Pune. Mr. Deepak Shinde, a local forest guard, first reported having seen a 'multicoloured bird' which I subsequently identified as the threetoed kingfisher. I was deeply overwhelmed on sighting this kingfisher, which usually inhabits moist deciduous and evergreen forests and resides close to waterbodies like streams and rivulets. "During the monsoon this bird disperses far and wide and usually dies by dashing against walls or shutters of windows." (COMPACT HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, Ali and Ripley, 1987). When I first saw this bird, it was perched on a bamboo twig and seemed to be completely exhausted. We tried to save the bird. However, on that rain-soaked, breezy, cloudy

evening — an evening difficult for local migratory birds — the kingfisher was soon found to be dead. Mr. Ramesh Salunke, a taxidermist of the Zoological Survey of India, while skinning the bird, noticed fine fissures and cracks on the skull. From these head injuries it appeared that the bird had hit against something.

Dr. Savita Paknikar, a pathologist, found nothing in the stomach that could have contributed to its death. During the monsoons, the threetoed kingfisher is occasionally seen in the dry deciduous forests of the Sinhagad valley about 20 km southwest of Pune.

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## 11. INFANTICIDE IN HOOPOE *UPUPA EPOPS* LINNAEUS

During a stay at Corbett Tiger Reserve in Uttar Pradesh, India, I witnessed interesting behaviour in hoopoes (*Upupa epops*). I stayed at Dhikala in a house which had a wooden floor, with numerous crevices in it. According to the residents, a pair of hoopoes would make a nest in one of these holes almost every year. On March 3, 1997, the first nesting was observed. After a few days, the female started incubating while the male brought her food. Sometimes the male would bring food (usually grubs, termites etc.) almost forty times in a day. After about two weeks, the chicks hatched and faint noises from inside the hole could be heard. The female had now come out of the nest and on March 20, 1997, I saw a hoopoe, probably a male, constantly pecking at the entrance of the nest. I saw it trying to go inside the nest in which it finally succeeded. It appeared to be pecking at something, as a lot

of drumming noises could be heard. After some time, it came out with some feathers in its beak which it promptly threw down the balcony. It went back in, to come out with a live chick in its beak. This chick was also thrown down the balcony. The robbing continued, and again it managed to come out with an egg which was also thrown down.

Such systematic killing of dependent offspring by replacing males is widespread among animals and has been reported in several primate species e.g. langurs (*Presbytis entellus*, Hrdy 1977), lions (*Panthera leo*, Bertram 1975), captive rodents e.g. collared lemming (*Dicrostonyx groenlandicus*, Mallory and Brooks 1978) and among birds in male barn swallows (*Hirundo rustica*), house wrens (*Troglodytes aedon*), house sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) and female Northern jacanas (*Jacana spinosa*) as reported by Rowher (1986).

Infanticide is most likely to benefit replacements when the individual whose offspring are killed has little option but to re-nest with the replacing individual. Infanticide by replacing males has also been viewed as a male reproductive strategy whereby males stop females from investing in the offspring of other males (Rowher, 1986). In the case of hoopoes, the time of nesting usually starts from March and continues till May (Ali and

Ripley, 1987) hence it was still very early and it is likely that the killer hoopoe was a replacement male which was trying to speed up the return of the female to sexual receptivity.

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12. FRUGIVORY BY THE GREAT BLACK WOODPECKER *DRYOCOPUS JAVENSIS*

The diet of the great black woodpecker (or the whitebellied woodpecker) *Dryocopus javensis* consists mostly of ants, termites, and grubs and pupae of wood-boring beetles and very rarely honey bees (Ali and Ripley 1983). There is no specific mention of fruit in the diet of this large woodpecker though several woodpeckers have been reported to consume fruit (Short 1982).

During the course of my study on woodpeckers of the Western Ghats, I had, on two different occasions, seen the great black woodpecker feeding on fruit.

On April 27, 1995, I found a family of four (2 adult and 2 young) great black woodpeckers at Anakkayam near Sholayar in Kerala. They were moving close to the Forest Station and were not the least bothered by the presence of the forest staff who lived in the station. I noticed the birds on a *Macaranga peltata* tree just a few metres from the buildings feeding on the dark ripe fruit. Both the adults and the young ones were plucking the berries and feeding on them.

The second instance of frugivory was noticed on May 2, 1996 at the Someshwara

Wildlife Sanctuary in Dakshin Kannada district of Karnataka. A male great black woodpecker was seen perched on a fruiting *Olea dioica* tree and feeding on the ripe purple-coloured fruit. It was observed for over 10 minutes on this tree and appeared to be feeding most of the time.

Short (1982) reports that about 27% of the diet of the related pileated woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) of North America consists of various fruits, berries and nuts. However, there is no mention of fruit in the diet of the Eurasian black (*D. martius*) or whitebellied woodpeckers. Fruit may be used by the great black woodpecker to supplement insect food which is perhaps scarce in the late dry season in the Western Ghats.

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